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WHOLENESS

Healing waters of Spirit

The Biblical "water of life" can symbolize our origin and life in Spirit.

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Walking Along the seashore with my son, I noticed a piece of coral with a layer of barnacles covering the under side. They reminded me of a story that a schoolteacher had told me.

Barnacles live in salt water and attach themselves to all sorts of objects, including the hulls of ships. After a while, the layers of barnacles accumulate to the degree that the speed of the ship is noticeably reduced. But barnacles cannot live in fresh water; if a ship is sailed only in fresh water, it will be free of barnacles.

Thinking further about this, I asked myself, Do you view yourself and others as mortals, originating and dwelling in the "salty waters" of materiality, where barnacles of fear, disease, aging, limitation, attach themselves to you? Do you let this misconception in its various forms multiply, limiting your freedom and slowing down your spiritual progress? Or are you understanding that man dwells in the "fresh waters" of Spirit, where no such "barnacles" can live and where man freely expresses his God-given harmony?

These questions led me to consider several Bible references to *water*. For instance, a verse in the first chapter of Genesis says that God separated the waters with a firmament.¹

Commenting on this verse, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "Spiritual understanding, by which human

conception, material sense, is separated from Truth, is the firmament."² I realized that in our growth Spiritward, we can rely on spiritual understanding to separate the misconceptions of life as material from that which truly is our life.

The Bible makes clear that God, Spirit, is the fountain, the source, of life. From Spirit, life that is both material and spiritual cannot come. Spirit and matter are incompatible. Spirit is pure, indestructible; matter is subject to contamination and deterioration; a combination of the two is impossible. The book of James, describing contrasting elements that cannot come from the same source, concludes, "So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."³ We are actually entirely spiritual and have always dwelt and will always dwell in Spirit.

*We are actually
spiritual and have
always dwelt
in Spirit.*

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, remarking on the Master's works, Jesus spoke of the need to be "born of water and of the Spirit."⁴ As Nicodemus pointed out, we cannot enter again into our mother's womb and be born again. But the understanding of God and man as revealed through Christ enables us to understand that our true origin and dwelling place is Spirit. To be born of the water and of the Spirit includes spiritualization of thought; this takes us beyond the limited sense of life as matter-based or matter-governed.

Spiritualization and purification of thought constitute baptism. Although John the Baptist performed an outward baptism by water, he was giving a sign, or symbol, of the need for purification of thought, for the quiet repenting of sinful, material ways. Mrs. Eddy describes *baptism* in this way: "Purification by Spirit; submergence in Spirit."⁵ Baptism is not so much a washing of oneself in water as it is the washing of one's thought.

Certainly it was this spiritual purification that the Old Testament prophet Elisha had in mind when he sent word to Naaman, a leper, to wash seven times in the waters of the Jordan River.⁶ Naaman reacted with anger and pride, refusing to wash in the Jordan River, thinking that the rivers in his beloved Damascus were just as good. The tender and humble words of his servants helped encourage Naaman to wash away the pride and anger of resistance. He dipped himself in the Jordan seven times and came forth pure, clear, beautifully healed.

*Instead of being afraid,
I rejoiced that I lived
in God, in Soul.*

The river held no healing powers itself. It was the change of the basis—that is, the spiritualization—of Naaman's thought that resulted in his cleansing. By humbling himself, he yielded to Spirit, and so pride and stubbornness could not hold on to him. Through the purifying, baptizing, of his thought, the leprosy also dissolved.

There is another important account of cleansing, this time in the New Testament. Jesus washed his disciples' feet and instructed them to do the same for each other.⁷ In following Jesus, we may not literally take water and wash one another's feet. We do have, however, the gracious opportunity to pour out Christly love, to embrace, tenderly and humbly, all mankind in the understanding that the foundation and origin of each individual are purely spiritual. Each one is living and moving in Him, in Spirit, forever free from material limitations.

Once I had a festering growth on my hand that would not heal and was quickly growing larger. One night, the growth was very painful and shouting for attention. Right at the moment when it seemed to shout the loudest, I rejoiced that I had always "sailed" in the pure, fresh waters of Spirit. Instead of being overcome with fear, I gently laughed at the thought that this condition could be real, given the fact that as a child of God I lived in Him, in Soul, Spirit, where matter could not even exist.

All discords, disease, aging, death, stem from the false premise that we live in matter.

Understanding that we live in Spirit and growing in our daily practice of this truth make void material conditions and reveal the present purity of our nature.

The morning after I had been rejoicing in these ideas, while I rested my hand in my lap at the breakfast table, the growth effortlessly fell away into the napkin. The skin underneath was smooth and clear as if nothing had ever been there. And the spiritual fact of my being was that no disease had ever been there; I had never lived in matter to be vulnerable to disease. Barnacles cannot exist in fresh water; a painful growth cannot exist in the purity of Spirit.

The book of Revelation speaks of "a pure river of water of life" coming out of the throne of God. Continuing on, it says, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."⁸ This "pure water" of life symbolizes for me our origin and existence in Spirit. Accepting God as our only source and dwelling place, we find our life joyously liberated from whatever would attach us to material conditions or material conditions to us. We live forever freely and safely in Spirit.

*Therefore with joy shall
ye draw water out of the
wells of salvation.*

Isaiah 12:3

¹ See Gen. 1:6↑

² *Science and Health*, p. 505↑

³ James 3:12↑

⁴ See John 3:1-5↑

⁵ *Science and Health*, p. 581↑

⁶ See II Kings 5: 1-14↑

⁷ See John 13:1-16↑

⁸ Rev. 22:1,17↑

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